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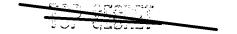
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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs EO 12958 6.2(c)

29 April 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: OXCART Deployment Proposal

- 1. I want to invite your attention to the critical need for adequate intelligence in order to detect a possible Chinese Communist strategic buildup in South China and North Vietnam which might lead to their direct involvement in the Vietnam war. I consider foreknowledge of any Chinese intent to intervene in the Vietnam war to be so vital to the national interest that the full collection resources available to the United States Government should be committed to the acquisition of intelligence in this connection.
- 2. The collection of intelligence to give early warning of possible Chinese Communist intervention in the Vietnam war has been assigned highest priority by the Intelligence Community. It is my conviction, shared by the United States Intelligence Board, that high resolution overhead photography is essential to obtain such intelligence. The Joint Chiefs of Staff likewise are on record that every means be exploited as a matter of highest priority to obtain high resolution photographic coverage of ground force installations, major complexes, and key lines of communication in the South China and North Vietnam areas. The collection task involves adequate initial coverage and subsequent periodic coverage of heavily defended targets in North Vietnam and targets in South China. Present coverage is inadequate both as to extent and timeliness.
- 3. Currently, satellite photographic missions are being programmed to achieve the maximum coverage of key targets in South China and North Vietnam. However, because of design characteristics of the vehicle and weather conditions in the

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APPROVED FOR RELEASE DATE: AUG 2007





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area, satellite photography has only a very limited capability to provide the desired intelligence. In South China, [

the survivability of this aircraft against strengthened Chinese air defense facilities is becoming increasingly doubtful. Heavy concentrations of air defenses have rendered many of the highest priority target areas in North Vietnam relatively inaccessible to U-2's. Drone missions into this area have provided some coverage, but the reliability of continued coverage is uncertain. I am of the firm belief, therefore, that we cannot rely on the presently committed collection assets to provide the timely data base line and the subsequent periodic coverage we need to determine change.

- In December 1965 the OXCART aircraft and systems, including countermeasure defensive systems, were deemed operationally ready. This is the most advanced capability for collecting high resolution photography available to the U.S. Government. It is judged to be virtually immune to air defenses in the South China and North Vietnam areas. It is ready for action and I believe it should be committed to help fill this urgent intelligence need. The OXCART can be deployed to a base in Okinawa and be ready for operational missions approximately three weeks from go-ahead.
- An obstacle to achieving agreement to commit the OXCART vehicle has been the belief that such a step might be misinterpreted by the Chinese Communists as preparation by the U.S. for aggressive moves against China. The United States Intelligence Community and I do not share this belief. my view that the Chinese probably would soon come to regard the OXCART as another stage in a continuing U.S. collection program, and that they would not be led to take any drastic new military action unless there were other simultaneous U.S. overt actions which could be interpreted by them as an intent to attack China. Barring the loss of an OXCART aircraft over Chinese territory, I would not expect the Chinese to react in a way as to significantly affect U.S. national interests. have also assessed probable reactions of other countries to the use of OXCART and I am attaching a Special National Intelligence Estimate on this overall subject.



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6. From the standpoint of the urgency of the intelligence
requirement, I would prefer to recommend to you that the
OXCART vehicle be committed as soon as possible for operational
missions over both South China and North Vietnam. I am
presently proposing, however, immediate use of OXCART princi-
pally over North Vietnam with but minor penetration of South
China. I am doing this because the U-2's still offer some
prospect of adequate coverage in the prospect of adequate coverage in the
prospect of adequate coverage in the South China area and I
believe it prudent to assure that this capability cannot ful-
fill the requirement before recommending full commitment of
the OXCART in this politically sensitive area. In the event
10-2, together with satellite photography proved
incapable of fulfilling the requirement, I would expect to
recommend to you the full operational commitment of the OYCART
over South China.

- 7. A factor which significantly affects the collection of overhead photography in South China and North Vietnam is the weather. The climate in this area deteriorates sharply in the summer months from June through August. This condition limits the capability of all overhead reconnaissance assets. At the same time, however, it points up the need for a relatively invulnerable, reliable, quick reaction capability, such as OXCART, to maximize the exploitation of decreasing opportunities for photographic coverage during the summer months.
 - 8. In summary, then, I am recommending to you:
 - a. That the OXCART vehicle be deployed immediately to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa.
 - b. That the OXCART vehicle be used as soon as possible following deployment for photographic coverage of highest priority intelligence targets in North Vietnam.
 - c. That the OXCART vehicle be held in readiness for backup photographic coverage of China should missions



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prove incapable of fulfilling the intelligence requirements.

9. I am attaching additional data to support the conclusions and recommendations above.

W. F. Raborn
Director of Central Intelligence

Attachments:

- A. SNIE #10-2-66: "Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action"
- B. Briefing Book: "OXCART Deployment Proposal"



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Distribution: Copy 1 - The President w/att A, cy 49 & att B, cy 1 2 - Secretary McNamara w/att A, cy 48; att B, cy 2 3 - Secretary Vance w/att A, cy 50; att B, cy 3 4 - Secretary Rusk w/att A, cy 51; att B, cy 4 5 - Mr. Rostow w/att A, cy 52; att B, cy 5 6 - Mr. Bundy w/att A, cy 53; att B, cy 6 7 - Mr. Coyne w/att A, cy 54; att B, cy 7 8 - Director, DIA w/att A, cy 55; att B, cy 8 9 - Director, NRO w/att A, cy 56; att B, cy 9 10 - DCI w/att A, cy 57; att B, cy 10 w/att B, cy 11 11 - DDCI 12 - ExDir/Compt w/att B, cy 12 13 - D/DCI/NIPE w/att B, cy 13 14 - 15 - COMOR w/atts B, cys 14 & 15 16 - 17 - D/Recce/CIA w/atts B, cys 16 & 17 18 - C/BNE w/att B, cy 18 19 - DD/P w/att B, cy 19 20 - D/OSA w/att B, cy 20 21 - DD/I w/att B, cy 2122 - DD/S&T w/att B, cy 22

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Note: Attachment A = BYE #44001-66, SNIE 10-2-66: "Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action"

Attachment B = BYE #0095-66, Briefing Book: "OXCART Deployment Proposal"

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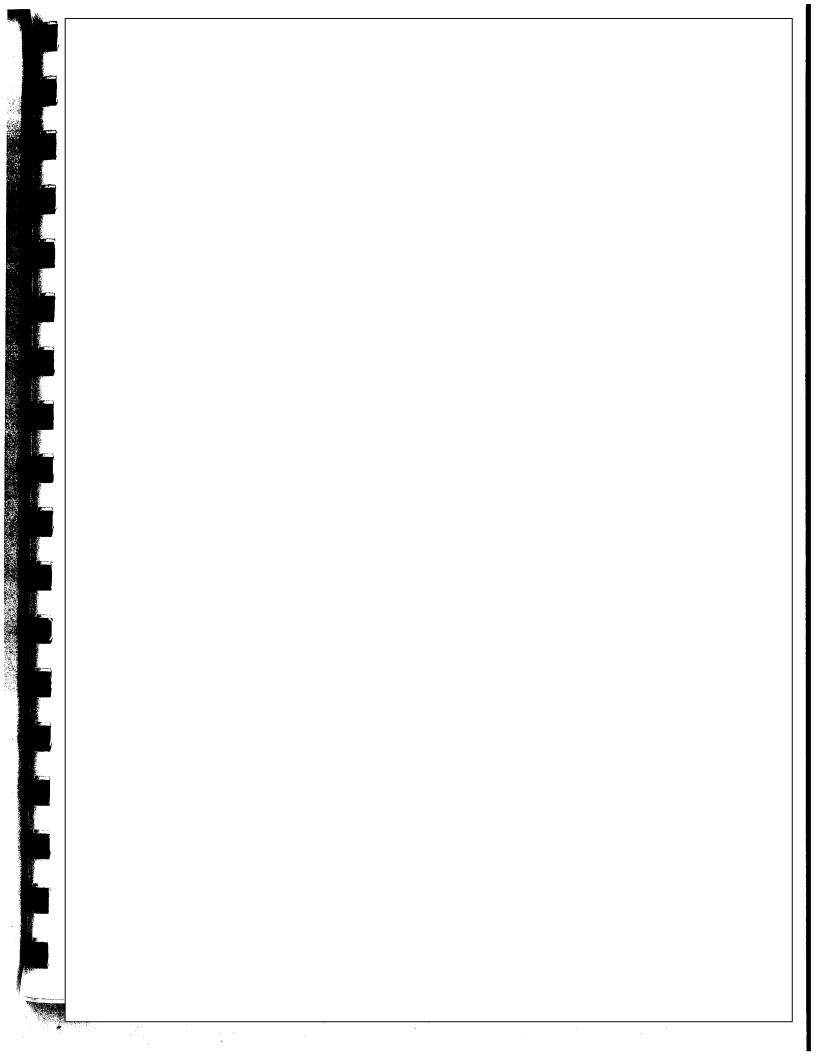
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OXCART

Deployment Proposal

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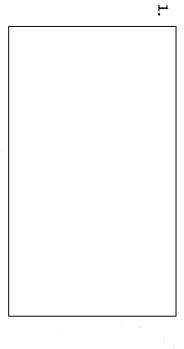
- There is a critical need for adequate intelligence to detect possible Chinese Communist strategic buildup in South China and North Vietnam which might lead to their direct involvement in the Vietnam war.
- acquire coverage on targets in South China and North Vietnam, chiefly ground force installations, major complexes and key lines of communication. In all, there are targets, in South China and in North Vietnam on which we need a data base and thereafter selective periodic surveillance coverage. (The highest priority area for coverage is shaded in red on the accompanying maps.)

- II. What resources are we now committing to this collection effort?
- Clandestine assets cannot be counted on to provide us the essential basic information. We must rely primarily on communications intelligence, and on reconnaissance photography.

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- III. Our present photographic reconnaissance effort is good, but not as good as it could be.
- the heart of all photographic intelligence. By photographing all key areas within a given time frame, we can establish a point of departure for spotting possibly significant changes at a future time in the same areas. To date our baseline coverage is by no means complete for South China. What we do have is spotty in terms of detail and resolution. For example we may know that a particular military base is operational, but we may not be able to discern what equipment is parked around the area.



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B. There are now four high altitude, high resolution reconnaissance programs providing photography of South China and North Vietnam. In addition, tactical low altitude reconnaissance missions also cover North Vietnamese targets on preand post-strike sorties. These five programs have provided coverage of some of the strategic targets. A portion of this coverage has proved to be of sufficient quality to provide base line data and, in some cases, the periodic surveillance coverage which we seek.

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2. The U-2 aircraft system, operated by SAC under the program code name TROJAN HORSE, is used primarily over North Vietnam and is not authorized to operate over China proper, although it occasionally obtains some oblique coverage of South China from across the border.

- 3. The BLUE SPRINGS program is carried out by drone photographic aircraft, operating over portions of South China but primarily over North Vietnam.
- 4. The KH-7 program is our high resolution satellite reconnaissance system.
- IV. Despite their excellence, all of these systems are limited.
- A. The tactical jets and the drones are vulnerable in varying degrees not only to enemy fighters but also to both conventional AAA and to SAMs.
- B. The U-2s can be downed by SAMs and, under some circumstances, by MIG-21s.
- C. While the satellites are not vulnerable to enemy attack, their success depends largely on weather. They cannot seek out breaks in cloud cover; our capability to adjust their flight paths is limited.

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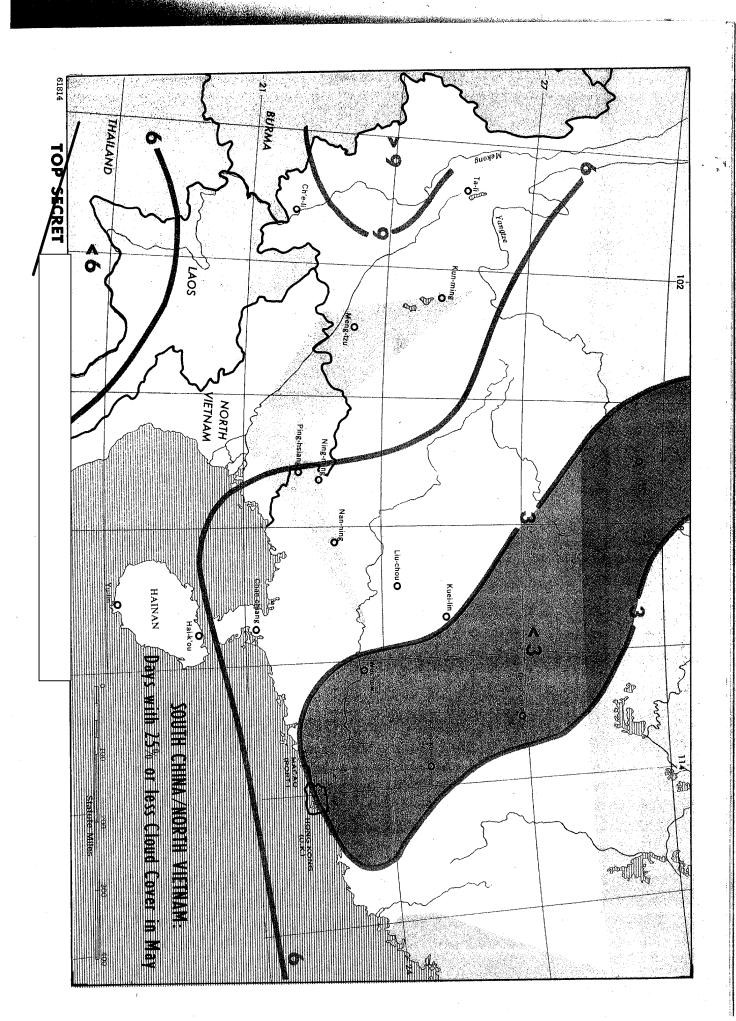
- D. Let me summarize our experience with the four basic programs from October 1, 1965 to April 23, 1966.
- sions were flown. These missions obtained base line coverage of our priority targets, in South China and in North Vietnam. During this same period we also achieved periodic surveillance of a third of these targets. Thus in nearly seven months we have acquired base line data on less than half of our priority objectives and have accomplished little periodic surveillance.
- 2. From this experience I conclude that the reconnaissance tasks which we need to accomplish in South China and North Vietnam are unlikely to be achieved successfully if we must continue to rely solely on the assets which we are currently using.

- V. Adding the OXCART to the existing combination of systems would give us undeniable advantages.
- A. The OXCART, like the satellites, is virtually invulnerable to fighters and surface-to-air missiles. It can cover high-priority targets now denied to U-2s and tactical photo reconnaissance aircraft.
- B. Unlike the satellites, OXCART can program coverage when there are sudden openings during periods of sustained bad weather—and weather is a prime consideration in South China and North Vietnam.
- C. It is bad now, and will be particularly bad from June through September.

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D. This map shows the number of days in May when the weatherman predicts days with 25 percent or less cloud cover, in various areas of China and Vietnam. The grey tone shows the area where there will be three days or less in the course of the month.

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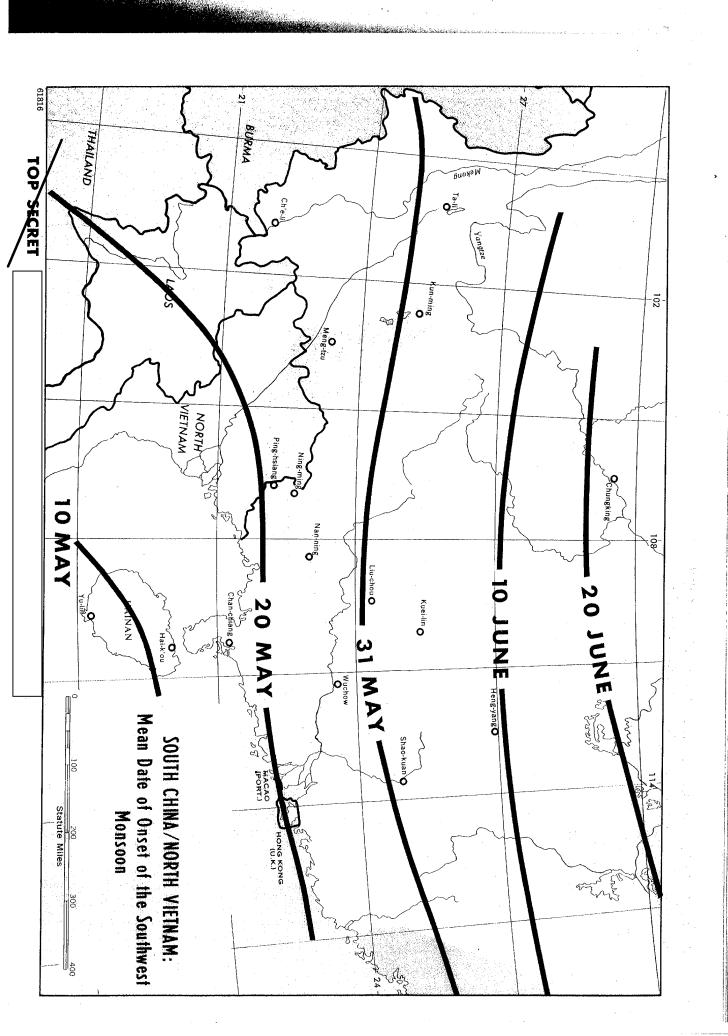
In June, with the onset of the monsoon, the entire area promises less than three days of weather suitable for photography.

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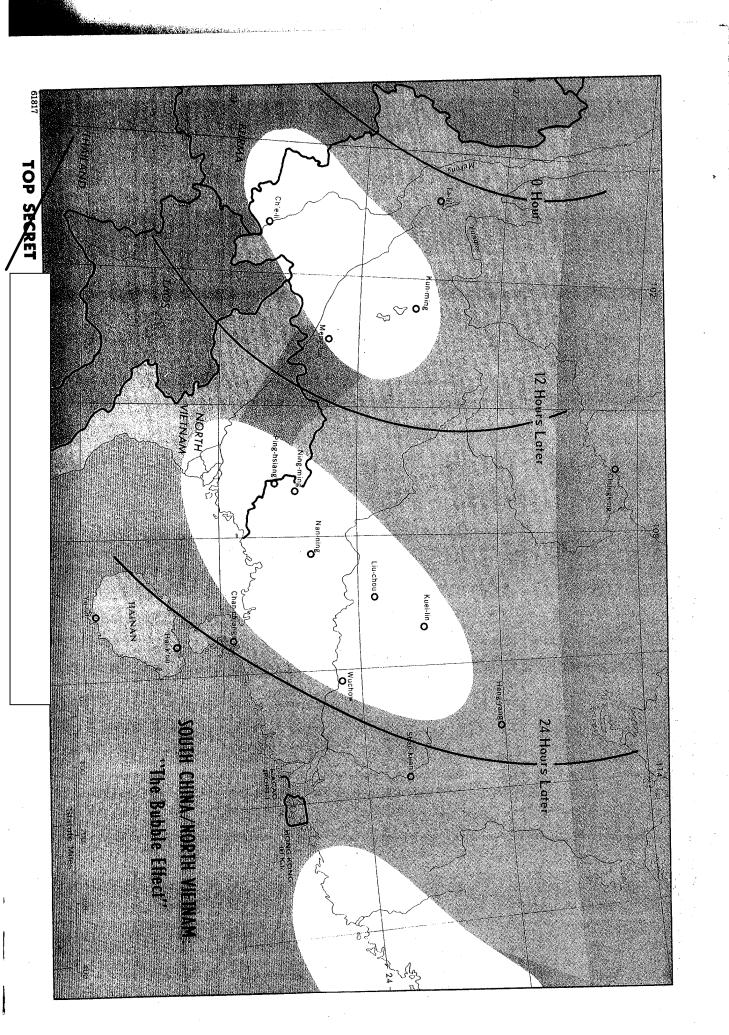
This map shows the approximate time when the oncoming southwest monsoon can be expected to preclude most possibilities of photography over the various areas. From June through September, there will be a little good reconnaissance weather in the area.

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- however, when a large hole or "bubble" will open in the overcast and permit photography. These "bubbles" are relatively predictable to the weathermen, and this picture shows a hypothetical bubble, at 12-hour intervals, as it is blown across China from west to east.
- 1. In past years we have been able to anticipate these peepholes and exploit them with a U-2. The reconnaissance satellites, with their predetermined orbits, cannot be programmed to take advantage of these bubbles. A manned aircraft is the only vehicle that can use these openings to gather some data-base data and changes from the base-on the Chinese military posture.

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I. In short, we are facing a period of over four months when our potential enemy will have an important ally on his side—the weather. This weather screen will retard our collection of knowledge on his homeland. There may be enough good weather days, however, to let us cover most of the targets we need for our photographic base if we augment present assets with a reliable quick-reaction capability that can exploit limited weather openings.

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- VII. The quick reaction reconnaissance asset that could do much to help us is the OXCART, shown in this photograph.
- A. This is an aircraft that can fly over denied areas at more than three times the speed of sound, and at altitudes in excess of 84,000 feet.
- 1. It has demonstrated that it can provide highresolution photography of a swath 50 miles wide.
- B. There are three of these aircraft ready to go, manned by qualified civilian pilots, under CIA control.

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Range ... __ Mach 3.1 1860 Knots w/o Inflight Refueling

. 84,000 Ft. Plus

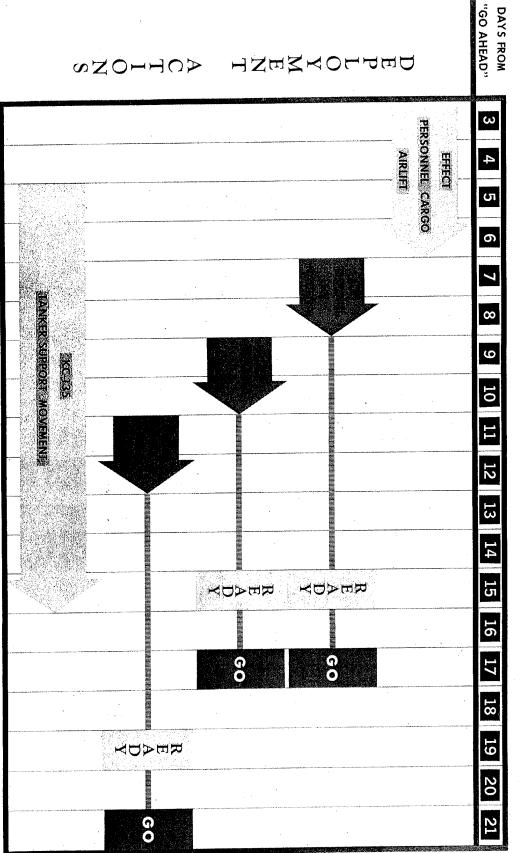
- ဂ We have pre-positioned 27 support personnel and a million pounds of equipment at Kadena.
- Þ. The operational, housing and messing facilities are ready. Shop equipment, spare parts, motor vehicles, and POL

supplies are in place.

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This chart shows the time required to begin operations after the authority is given to proceed. We estimate that on authorization to use the OXCART, the aircraft could begin operations over target areas in about 3 weeks.

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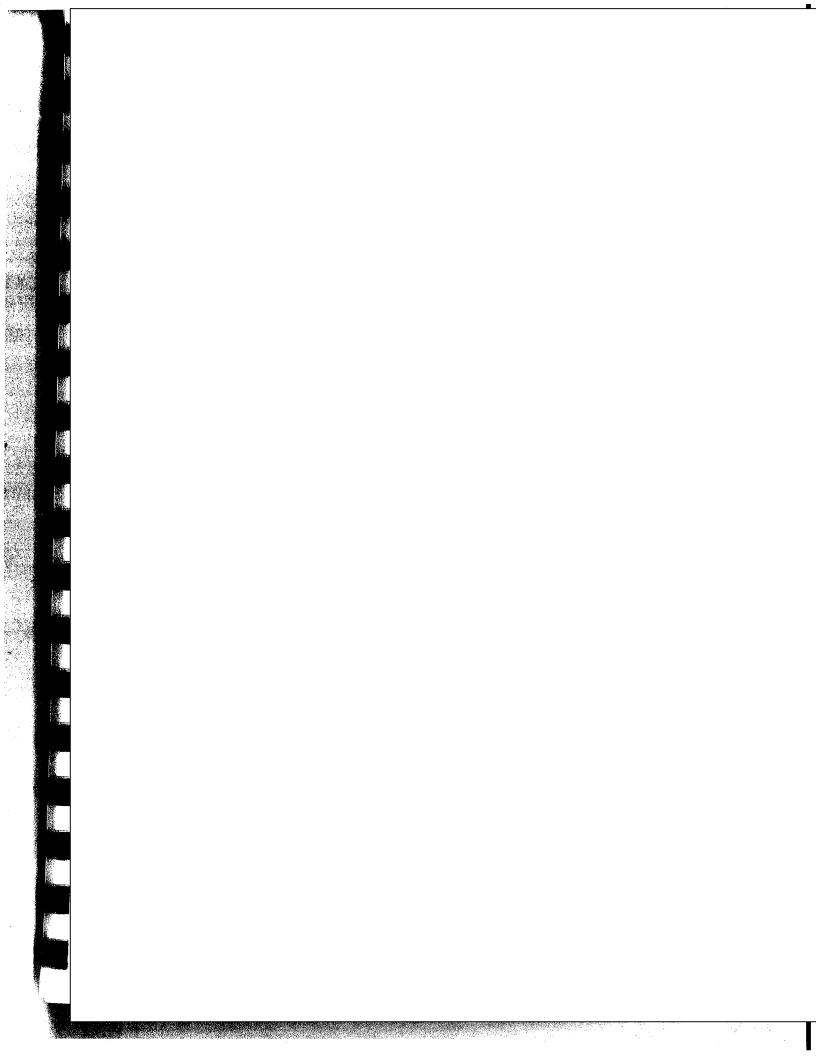


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	critical	F. Here is a sample flight path for the OXCART, restricted to

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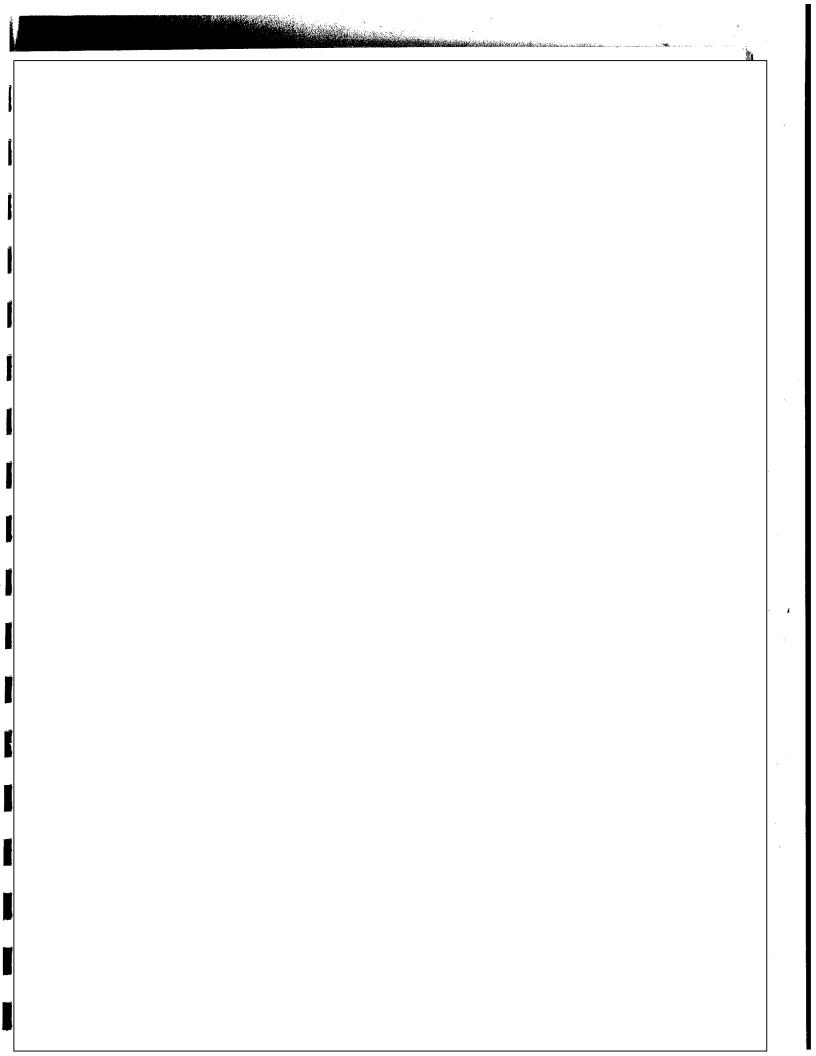


1. With a minor penetration of South China, a flight track could cover argets in just over North Vietnam and

over South China.

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- X. It is my recommendation that, as a first step, OXCART be deployed to Kadena, and that it be employed to acquire photography of North Vietnam.
- A. A favorable decision on this recommendation now or in the near future will give us an opportunity to acquire experience in operational use of the aircraft, and to test Chinese Communist reaction to its presence in the theater.
- B. If, as now appears likely, the U-2 program will not succeed in acquiring the necessary coverage of the targets within South China, a further recommendation will be submitted concerning the use of OXCART in that area.

- C. I believe that the need to proceed with OXCART is clear and demonstrable.
- D. Let me simply say in closing: The OXCART is the best reconnaissance system we have. China is a target of the highest priority. To use less than the best now in observing this restless potential enemy would be incautious. To use less than the best would not be commensurate with the existing degree of our national involvement and risk in Vietnam.

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<u>.</u> port any Chinese Communist or North would certainly not make it the cause of Soviet territory. They would probably supbe to forestall the use of the aircraft over The primary concern of the Soviets would Vietnamese propaganda campaigns, but

Ħ. Ħ a major crisis in US-Soviet relations.

<u>되</u> In other countries around the world, there the outcry over the U-2 affair in 1960. craft were lost, but nothing approaching would be some sharp criticism if an air-

- VIII. The OXCART aircraft is virtually invulnerable to enemy action, and it has the capability to react quickly to meet the few good weather openings—like the "bubble" effect—that we are going to have to depend upon if we are to continue our surveillance of the Chinese from June through September.
- A. We believe, therefore, that the use of OXCART affords the best possibility of obtaining early warning on any Chinese Communist intervention in Southeast Asia.
- other countries to the use of OXCART. The problem has been studied specifically by the United States Intelligence Board, and a Special National Intelligence Estimate has been published on this subject. A copy is available for your perusal.

- A. In Summary, the estimate concludes that the Chinese Communists would not take any drastic new military action. They might think at first that the United States was seeking target intelligence to be used at an early date. We feel, however, that the Chinese Communists would soon come to regard this vehicle as merely another vehicle in the continuing United States collection program.
- from revealing the successful overflight of Chinese territory, as they have done in the case of successful U-2 flights. If an aircraft came down in China, however, there would be a major political and propaganda outcry.
- B. We believe that the North Vietnamese also would show no significant reaction to the use of OXCART.

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